

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

Where are the Democracies?

- Standard: I. Culture
II. Time, Continuity, and Change
III. People, Places, and Environments
IV. Individual Development and Identity
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
VIII. Science, Technology, and Society
IX. Global Connections
- Grade Level: 9–12 (philosophical discussion)
- Objectives: The student will:
- Discuss philosophical ideas on the development of democracy
 - Explain to peers their interpretations of democratic government
 - Describe different problems growing democracies encounter
- Time: 1 class period
- Materials: Documents: **1950** *On a Certain Impatience with Latin America*
- Exercises: Philosophical Discussion Questions
- Materials: 4 small boxes with lids
- Procedures:

Setting the Stage

Louis J. Halle worked for the Department of State from 1941 to 1954 and was a member of the policy planning staff from 1952 to 1954. He later became a professor at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. Over the years, he wrote many articles for *Foreign Affairs*, the magazine of the Council on Foreign Affairs. He signed these articles with the letter “Y,” which was a play on the “X” signature used by George Kennan for his influential 1946 article on the Soviet Union.

Halle’s intellectual interests were wide-ranging. He was both a noted philosopher as well as a bird-watching naturalist and published books on both. In this lesson, students will read an article on the development—or lack of it—in Latin America and will reflect on it through philosophical conversation.

Idea adapted by N.Cope/
Professional Connections
after seeing similar
idea on dining tables at
the American Girl store
restaurant in Chicago.,
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Pre-Lesson

1. See the directions for creating Conversation Boxes, provided below, and complete 4 small boxes. Make them all look different.
2. Print the exercise, *Philosophical Discussion Questions*—one copy for each box. Cut the questions into strips, then fold them and place into the boxes. Put on a lid so that students will be curious about the contents when they are displayed in the front of the room.
3. Print the document, *On a Certain Impatience with Latin America*, (one for each student) and number them 1–4 alternately in the top right corner in ink. (Students can erase pencil.) Mix them up and hand them out in random order.

Lesson Day

1. Have the Conversation Boxes on display as students enter.
2. Distribute the document and ask students to read it carefully. Explain that the arguments are detailed and that it will be necessary to read it attentively. Students should make notes in the margin (marginalia) as they read. They will be responsible for a thorough discussion on the article.
3. When most have finished, ask them to note the number at the top of the document and to form groups based on that number.
4. Ask the group to select a leader and then send the leader to choose one of the boxes on display. (All boxes have same questions but they do not know that.)
5. Explain that they are to pull questions out of the box, one at a time, at random and discuss them based on the contents of the document. Some fairly deep philosophical discussion will follow and the leader of each group needs to keep the discussions going.
6. Use the remaining time to discuss as many questions in the box as possible.
7. Before the class ends, ask each group to explain which question (so far) has been the most difficult to answer and why.
8. Collect the questions and the boxes.
9. Tell students they will see these questions on the next quiz.

Extension Activities:

1. If time grows short, continue the use of the questions again in another lesson when you have time to do something extra.
2. You can use this "question box" technique for any kind of review session, using different questions. ■

Using a Conversation Box

The brain is designed to grow through social interaction. Brains make new neurological connections when their owners engage in conversation and debate. The conversation box is a versatile tool that can be adapted to fit the goals and objectives of each course to promote student discussion.



1. Find some small boxes with lids that can be decorated. (Generally available at any dollar or craft store.)
2. Either the teacher or the students can decorate the boxes, depending on the available time. Themed boxes can be good (basketball season, holidays, topics, etc.), but make each box different so students have to decide which one they are going to choose for their group. Make enough boxes to accommodate a reasonable number of student groups.
3. Create new sets of questions for each goal/objective, print, cut out, and put inside the boxes. Include all levels of questions, but mostly higher order thinking questions. Each box usually contains the same questions, but the questions could be varied.
4. When the time is right in a lesson for group work or discussion, have someone from the group come forward to select a box.
5. Set a time limit for discussion on all the questions in the box.
6. Have the team choose their hardest question—the question they thought was the most difficult to answer to report back to the class as a whole. Depending on lesson content, other criteria may be chosen.



7. Use the questions from the conversation boxes again as test questions, writing samples, or in other extension activities.